



ASBESTOS

HEALTH AND SAFETY PREVENTION

We all have a part to play for health and safety under the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSA), also referred to as the [Internal Responsibility System](#) (IRS).

ASBESTOS

Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring fibrous minerals that are resistant to chemicals, fire, and electric current, great for tensile strength and thermal insulation. Because of these properties, asbestos was used in many building materials. Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), asbestos is prescribed as a designated substance. Ontario Regulation 278/05 describes the legal requirements for asbestos management in the workplace, with measures and procedures to control the risks of asbestos exposure.

WHERE IS ASBESTOS FOUND

Asbestos was regulated in Ontario under the Occupational Health and Safety Act in 1985. New asbestos use was banned in Canada in 2018. Older buildings may have asbestos containing materials (ACM) which could include floor tiles, ceiling tiles, cement, plaster, drywall, siding, panels, pipe insulation, industrial furnace and heating system insulation, building insulation and other building materials.

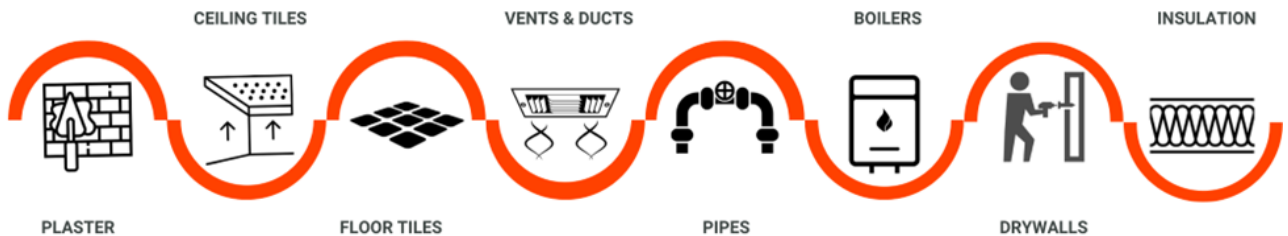


Image Source: www.canadarestorationservices.com/asbestos-removal/asbestos-inspections

HOW CAN YOU BE EXPOSED

Improper handling of ACM can release asbestos fibers into the air. The inhalation of microscopic fibers can cause serious illnesses including lung cancer, asbestosis and mesothelioma. The time period between exposure and the development of illness (known as latency period) can be up to 40 years.

Exposure can also occur to family members as a secondary exposure or take home exposure. This happens when a worker brings asbestos home on clothing, skin, or hair. Secondary exposures are just as dangerous as primary exposures.

HEALTH RISKS

ACM may not pose a risk if in good condition and not disturbed. However, if ACM is disturbed without proper care, microscopic fibers can be released into air and if inhaled can become trapped in the lungs leading to serious future health issues. All types of asbestos are hazardous and [can cause](#):

- Asbestosis a pulmonary fibrosis/pneumoconiosis
- Lung cancer
- Mesothelioma a rare cancer of the pleura of the lungs
- Gastrointestinal cancer (stomach, esophagus, colon, rectum)
- Laryngeal cancer (cancer of the larynx)
- Ovarian cancer
- Pleural diseases (pleural plaques, diffuse pleural fibrosis, pleural effusion)

This is why it is important to report concerns and be aware of hazards. See [GBC Virtual Health and Safety Board](#)

PREVENTION OF EXPOSURE

- Participate in any asbestos training provided
- Presume all building materials contain asbestos and be aware of where asbestos is located by asking supervisor and reading reports: [GBC Virtual Health and Safety Board](#)
- Do not remove, cut, drill, sand, grind or otherwise disturb any material that may contain asbestos
- Do not go above ceilings, behind walls or into crawl spaces unless areas have been cleared
- Do not pull cable or wiring through above-ceiling spaces with asbestos
- Do not install screws, pins, nails or hangers into asbestos ceiling or wall plasters
- Be careful not to damage walls, ceilings or floors when moving furniture or equipment
- Do not brush, sweep or vacuum textured asbestos ceiling plaster or plaster debris
- Ensure all renovation work is approved and led by Facilities Management
- Report any damage or deterioration of suspected building materials immediately

ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

An asbestos management program is a regulatory requirement if asbestos is identified in a building and includes:

1. Intent to control asbestos, limit exposure and comply with regulations
2. Current inventory of type, condition and location of all ACM that is reviewed regularly for accuracy
3. Inspection and testing at reasonable intervals (minimum yearly) to determine condition
4. Procedures to ensure work performed is done in accordance with proper asbestos controls in place
5. Notification of occupants, management, workers of related asbestos records
6. Worker training on asbestos

See our current Asbestos Management Program visit [GBC Virtual Health and Safety Board](#)

ASBESTOS ABATEMENT (REMOVAL AND REMEDIATION)

Asbestos abatement work includes removing, repairing, transporting and disposing of asbestos or materials that may contain asbestos. Asbestos abatement is strictly regulated and controlled under Regulation 278/05 of the OHSA. Only qualified abatement contractors should perform asbestos abatement work.

HOW TO REPORT ASBESTOS ISSUES AND CONCERNS

1. Report asbestos issues and concerns to your **Supervisor** (who should contact Health, Safety and Wellness and Facilities to investigate and may fill out a [SAIR form](#))
2. If issue is not immediately dealt with then report to your **JHSC Worker Representative**

EMPLOYER DUTIES

Employers and supervisors have an obligation to **take every reasonable precaution** to protect workers and by law and have the responsibility to keep workers safe from exposure to asbestos. See more duties [here](#).

Contact your [Joint Health and Safety Committee Worker Representative](#) for advice.

WORKER DUTIES

- Follow legislation, workplace health and safety policies and procedures
- Wear and use the protective equipment required
- Work and act in a way that will not hurt yourself or anyone else
- Report concerns, hazards, incidents, injuries, or illnesses to your **Supervisor** and exposures, injuries, and illnesses *that require time off work, accommodations, or health care* to [WSIB](#)
 - In case of injury or illness [poster](#)

YOUR RIGHTS

RIGHT TO KNOW - workers have a right to information and instruction about hazards they are exposed to and protocols in place to control exposure.

View the [Virtual Health and Safety Board](#), ask your Supervisor or [JHSC](#) for more information or clarification

RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE - Workers participate through the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) which is provided with additional information, the power to identify hazards and make formal recommendations.

Make suggestions to your Supervisor or through your campus [JHSC](#)

RIGHT TO REFUSE - Workers have the [right to refuse unsafe work](#) if they have a reason to believe their work is likely to endanger their health and safety.

Inform your Supervisor and if you need further guidance contact your [JHSC Worker Representative](#)

PROTECTION AGAINST REPRISAL - You have protection against reprisals under [OHSA](#)

APPLICABLE LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

- [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
- Regulation 490/09 Designated Substances
- Regulation 278/05 Asbestos on Construction Projects and in Buildings and Repair Operations

RESOURCES

- [Ontario Workplace Health and Safety](#)
- [Worker Health and Safety Awareness Four Steps](#)
- www.ohcow.on.ca/occupational-illness/exposures/asbestos
- www.ohcow.on.ca/injury-prevention/work-environment
- www.wsib.ca/sites/default/files/2019-03/asbestos_related_diseases.pdf
- [Workplace Exposure and Illness - Government of Ontario](#)
- www.odsp-ocrc.ca/asbestos-in-schools-occupational-risks-among-education-workers
- www.pshsa.ca/resources/asbestos-in-the-educational-workplace#home-pshsa-logo

A graphic with a red background and white abstract shapes. A white speech bubble-like shape contains the text "SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU" in blue, bold, uppercase letters.

SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU